

Parenting As Partners



Trends in Family Strengthening Conference

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Definitions

- Parent: one who is responsible for guiding a child to the highest level of achievement possible
- Partner: a person who shares or is associated with another in some action or endeavor



Workshop Goals

- Encourage **partner-centric** family strengthening interventions.
- Identify indicators that discourage an emphasis on partnering.
- Identify skills to engage the more reluctant partner.
- Share partnership strengthening exercises.



Parenting as Partners Perspective

- Children benefit when parents are **partners**.
- Partnering skills can be learned.
- A friendly parenting partnership makes other stress more manageable.
- Practicing and teaching these skills will make your own relationships more joyful!



Workshop Norms

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Practice respectful communication.
- Minimize electronic interruptions.
- Please take **chances** here. This is a safe place to practice relationship skills. Push the limits of your comfort zone.



Partner Work Contraindications

- Avoid *partner*-centric work when there are patterns of violence, control or intimidation.
- Partner-centric interventions will not succeed if one of the partners is **actively addicted**.
- A serious psychiatric disorder must be treated before partner-centric work is appropriate.



Screening for IPV

- Always interview couples separately.
- Ask about specific **behaviors** (funnel)
 - Are you afraid?
 - Does he yell and scream?
 - Has he ever threatened violence? Ever hit you?
- Create a **safety** plan if necessary
- Reframe violent behavior as unacceptable.



Engaging the Reluctant Partner

1. Everything we do is driven by our need to avoid **pain** or gain **pleasure**.
2. To change behavior, focus on:
 - > How not changing will be more painful than changing it.
 - > How changing behavior will bring immediate and measurable pleasure.



Engaging the Reluctant Partner

3. Flesh out the pain associated with following through on parenting with a partner tasks.
 - > What will you miss out on?
 - > What will you lose?
4. Begin to associate pleasure with taking action on the relationship.



Questions to Engage

- What do you like or respect about your parenting partner?
- How will taking action create greater happiness or success?
- What are the benefits you'll gain by taking action now?
- How are you **strong** enough to do this?



Vision Statement: The Partner I Chose to Be

1. List aspects of your parents' relationship style that you choose to adopt.
2. List aspects of your parents' relationship style that you chose not to use.
3. List **additional** relationship qualities that you chose to use in your parenting partnership.



Reflective Listening

- Listen with a clear and open **mind**.
- Listen for content as well as feelings.
- Listen for the underlying meaning.
- Put yourself in the other's position.
- Look for nonverbal cues.
- Restate and reflect: "I hear you saying _____ and you feel _____."



I Statements

1. I feel...
2. When you...
3. Because...
4. I would appreciate it if you would...



Dividing Parenting Tasks

1. List all the tasks and responsibilities for the upkeep of the family.
2. Each partner chooses the ones he or she prefers doing or is good at.
3. The remaining tasks and responsibilities are divided using negotiation, compromise and **problem solving**.



Cooperative Problem Solving

1. Define the problem and discuss the facts.
2. Brainstorm possible solutions.
3. Prioritize the alternatives and choose a solution.
4. Put the plan into action.
5. Evaluation/Feedback



Partnership Building Skills

- Relationship Esteem – Holding the relationship in warm regard despite imperfections and limitations (harmony>disillusionment>repair)
- Speaking Relationally – Contract while speaking; speak from the “I”, move from **complaint** to request



Fair Fighting Guidelines

- Fight by mutual **consent**
- Stick to the present
- Stick to the subject
- Do not hit below the belt
- Do not try to win it all
- Respect crying/ respect silence
- No **violence**



Strategies to Avoid

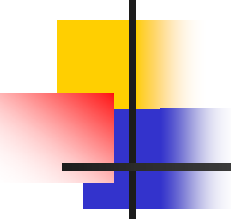
- Criticism – Attacking someone's personality or **character** rather than a behavior
- Contempt – Insults and psychological abuse, hostile humor, sarcasm, sneers, rolling your eyes
- Defensiveness – Denying responsibility, making excuses, yes-butting, cross complaining
- **Stonewalling** – Similar to withdrawal and avoidance, refusal to respond as a pattern



Action Step

I, _____, commit to practice
and discuss this specific partnering skill,
_____,
with one parent in the next seven days.

One way I can do this is _____
_____.



“A good teacher must believe in the ideas he teaches, but he must meet another condition, he must believe in the students to whom he offers the ideas.”

- A Course in Miracles